

## Finance Committee 1/14/16

Victor Garofalo, Tom Busa, Richard Bowen, Steven Steele, Elizabeth McClung, David Powell, Paul Mortenson, Ben Thomas

Capital: Brian Bartkus

Assessors: Ron Cordes, Alan Ferguson, Bruce Murphy

Planning: Glenn Garber, Catherine Perry, Jeff Cohen

Selectmen: Bill Moonan

Minutes of 12/10/15

Dave Powell: motion to approve

Paul Mortenson: second

6-0-1

### **Capital**

- Brian Bartkus
- Brief history and then the summary presented to the Selectmen
- \$39K higher request
- Ben: Just collecting information now and won't make a decision
- Steve S: Won't adjust model until we hear from everyone
- Brian: This year different. Spent the spring and summer meeting.
- Spring and fall focuses on 6-year plan
- Now we're fully staffed
- Professionalism of the 6-year plan from the staff and department heads
- Fire truck and ambulance needed this year, so DPW did not put forward big dump trucks
- Puts onus on us to increase our level of trust in their professionalism
- Ripple effect if something gets moved
- We have been told why we should spend the money and that we can afford it
- operating budget, chapter 90 funds
- Town wide communication costs came down, some funds became available
- Interior repairs to Old Town Hall have been delayed
- Lane School feasibility study: looking at the bubble. Executive summary suggests putting an addition at Lane. Requested a presentation from Jon Sills and will give opinion at Town Meeting. Looks like 4 to 5 classrooms at Lane, and wait a little for Davis. Sills has been trying to give a lot of information.
- 8.5 M is what is being requested
- We have vetted the CPA projects.
- One thing that has caused conversation: lift at press box.
- As a committee, we had more questions than answers. at best it's delayed.
- How many people use it, what for, at the time it was presented to the town, precedent-setting that projects would come to town incomplete. should tax-payers be responsible for this bill if there is already money that could be raised. Rec-revolving, cable TV, Mudge, Bedford Athletic Association

- Until March 2017 we have a variance to use the box without the lift. If we use the box after that time, we could face fines of \$1000 per day. Debate about what has to happen if the lift is not in by then. Shuttered? Brought to the ground? Still have time to work it out.
- Feasibility study might be delayed. 120K recommended added for modular. Davis is expecting to need a modular for this upcoming school year. This would combine with existing capital money to purchase a modular. 161K already there plus the 120K. A little in limbo now.
- If Liljegren didn't get funded, might take 100K and put towards B field. People are expecting that natural grass field to be developed.
- Elizabeth: what if they want to put the pool by the high school? what about the field?
- Brian: Rec department (Amy Hamilton and others) were invited to CapEx. They talked about Springs Brook.
- Elizabeth: don't want to do the field behind the HS if that's where the pool ultimately should go. Don't want to spend now just because otherwise it pushes all the other projects back. Don't want to spend just "because we have the money" and "we can."
- Brian: hopefully the 6-year plan will help avoid surprises.
- Tom: big concern when the software package went in maybe things wouldn't get vetted as well as they should, doing projects just because the computer says you should.
- Brian: much more confident than ever before that the process has been working.
- Tom: maybe we can afford it, but that's because we are continuing to raise taxes, and hopefully they will still look at need to have versus nice to have.
- Brian: every project vetted for its merits
- Rich: Town-wide \$1.348M for communication. Why not cheaper alternatives?
- Brian: some of the software and hardware is no longer being supported. Harder to replace. Savings will come from that. Cost of technology and being able to communicate between departments. Three different options were presented: Verizon, and two others. This seemed to make the most sense.
- Victor: our phone savings will be reduced. One central line, not pay per phone line.
- Rick Reed: town-wide communication system for telephone, voice-over-IP, and radio for public safety. Radio signals over in-town antennas. Will eliminate need to subscribe to numerous phone lines. Won't have much choice in the future: will need to go to a fiber network. Will serve DPW with communication with sewer pump stations on alarm systems; send video signals from town buildings to town hall.
- Rich: seems like might be a very high expense compared to other options.
- Ben: there is a presentation out there. It could answer lots of questions.

- Tom: when you look at elimination of lines, will it be managed and billed at one place? Is it done that way now?
- Rick: managed through town facilities budget. schools might be in schools budget
- Tom: would that cost be eliminated from schools and libraries then?
- Rick: possibly
- Dave: process is a question. Talk about doing a lot over the summer, but lots of articles you're hoping will come from Community Preservation, but they're not ready to vote yet, is there a way to get them to engage a little earlier and get synched?
- Brian: we talked about meeting after town meeting and talking about that process for next year. We'll have that discussion.
- Rick: yes, I heard Community Preservation wanted to start their process earlier.
- Victor: we have to determine what could be funded out of CPC.
- Bill Moonan: they feel they want to look further ahead sooner also, like the 6-year plan.
- Brian: they also have to find out the state match
- Ben: a little bewildering. The funding detail. Some of the school projects. Some of the detail is great. On future pages it's fuzzier. Three different window projects and the line items don't give any detail. Maybe put more detail, like what building. Maybe a key for the acronym.

**Assessors: Ron Cordes**

- Memo \$291,334 sent under FinCom
- adjusted by guideline by town manager for merit
- Change in maintenance agreement, for the software. Cost is going up. \$7,950 to \$12,900. A 5K increase over guideline.
- Piece of a FTE. We have flexibility by having enough for 4 full-time-equivalents. What we get says 3.7 FTE. If we were bound by that, and didn't have the slack to let her work 30 or 35 hours, there are things that wouldn't get done on time. Need \$11,000 more to meet this need.
- Steve Steele: Last year's budget was \$284, 453 and added to it was 2.5%.
- Ron: last year we lost the associate assessor. We hired a new associate assessor at a more reasonable salary. When we hired, we hired higher.
- Alan: increased ceiling part time to full time clerical, when we need her.
- pays for increase salary for associate
- increases maintenance cost for software
- increase subscription cost
- FY17 is year before evaluation.
- complete interim adjustment
- this year did not change basis of values

Goals:

- commercial: test the values of income producing properties: analysis
- Residential: condominium properties: narrowing variation in assessment from sale prices. Change way things are described. ongoing review: descriptions weighed against what is seen
- do things better, more efficiently, like export senior exemption information
- Staff development. We commit to grow our staff. help them learn new things
- Will have to hold off on upgrading system software if there is not an increase.
- If the increase is not added to the salary line, the part-time person would not be able to add hours on demand where required.
- Someone is getting longevity bump as well.
- Ben: selectmen's meeting, assertion made that some commercial properties were undervalued. Was curious to know what the plans were to either confirm or deny the assertion.
- Alan: some of the ones mentioned are multiple parcels. McDonald's is over 2 parcels.
- Ben: did the man have merit?
- Ron: quite a bit of merit. How we assess property is dictated tightly by department of revenue. State has to set the process. They may be great ideas, but if they violate the procedures we cannot use them.
- Bruce: methods for assessment: sales, income-expense , and cost
- We use income-expense approach.
- Sale price is not necessarily the value.
- One of Alan's goals is to review all the income properties to see the income and expense levels are accurate.
- Now the senior assessor can bring the commercial assessment in-house.
- Ben: we do not manage FTEs. moving the person up to a full-time basis, but only when there is a need, doesn't seem to balance out. Limited money. Free cash doesn't help operating budget.
- David: 5K software, 11K more for salary? Does it correlate to Alan's ability to do other work?
- Ron: average around 30 hours a week.
- Victor: 20.34 hours, 21.61 hours, 18 hours for the past three years
- If salary and isn't spent, reverts to free cash.
- Elizabeth: support for the appropriate salaries for our staff because the paying people fairly and appropriately people is important for our town to attract and retain quality employees. Take care of our people and not just the capital purchases.
- Tom: new growth. We've set aside 3M. What do we truly need to carry for liability?
- Alan: we use ratios for the type of the property.
- Ron: their filing system is bad, too. Could be others out there misfiled. We assign a risk factor to every case. Our liability is pushing 7M, and we need 3M to cover.

- Bruce: we're not good at predicting telecommunication cases
- Conservative in releasing money so there are no surprises.
- Tom: prior years' new growth has been high. Right now model shows 1.1M. Is this accurate?
- Alan: too early to tell. Survey comes over the summertime. July 1 is the inspection date. That's what's driven the growth the past two years. Houses are still being started, permits are still being pulled.
- Bruce: personal property is volatile.

### **Planning:**

- Housekeeping: under support column: reduced from 7500 to 5500. So total request is 195693.
- Merit put us in automatic deficit.
- Past two year level funded, but this year request modest increase for real cost increases, such as legal ads and sundries. \$785 increase over last year.
- 25-30 meetings per year. Minutes are somewhat specialized. Only have one administrative person, who gets compensated with time-and-a-half in comp-time. Need someone else in the office. so request to have someone to do the minutes.
- 2.6 hours converts to 11.6 hours per meeting @\$17 per hour (approx.) for a total of \$5500
- Rick: it has been helpful having someone who has been at the meeting be present in the office, so likes the comp-time approach.
- Glenn: losing that person in the department for comp time takes time away from other tasks.
- Tom: 2.5 hour meeting turns into 11.6 hours.
- Victor: recording secretary at FinCom: 6.5 hours total, for meeting and minutes.
- Elizabeth: any technology that could assist?
- Dave: what percent are public meetings?
- Glenn: because of the possibility of appeal, with controversy, there are regulatory matters.
- Dave: they had two meetings in a row. One there were continued public hearings that were going to be continued. Can't get business done. Some of it is allowing the department to get prepared properly. The lost time (comp time) might be a disadvantage to the department. Better use in the office. to help with backlog.
- Victor: board of health, recreation; finance all looking for someone to take minutes. If over 20 hours, they become benefit-eligible
- Rick: in the early 90s, had a recording secretary. Person who works outside doesn't always have minutes done efficiently. most municipalities use someone getting comp time

- Paul: have a feeling that some minutes are too extensive. worth training to minimize?
- Rick: reasonable summary, who was at meeting, and the vote.
- Catherine: 5 hours a week, about every other week for minutes.

**Zoning:**

- limited and general business
- Typical to hire consultants for zoning changes. We've done a lot in house to date.
- Steve: we've put aside money already.
- Ben: technically it is a place holder. The budget is not final.
- Victor: This has to be a separate article to have it carried over two years.
- Dave: what does it do for the growth of the tax base?
- Critique of what is there, create data base, look at parking, etc.
- look at overlays
- Deadline for article submission is next week.
- 67 different changes in industrial/commercial zoning. Not possible to write the whole article. Would like to ask for \$275 for professional clerical services to do that.
- support shown: will adjust if necessary
- next Fiscal Planning meeting Feb 8
- Tom: library: have always come in under guideline.
- Dave: sidewalks item: CPC eligible? a lot of appropriated money that hasn't been spent yet. Also First Parish windows.
- Ben: Selectmen: budgets still coming in. possible local transit expansion. Presentation goes with it.

Next week: health and library  
We will start at 8:30.

Motion to adjourn:  
David Powell  
Second:  
Paul Mortenson

7-0  
10:45 P.M. adjourned